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# U.S. Farm Population, 1980

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The U.S. farm population numbered 6.1 million during 1980, about 2.7 percent of the total U.S. population. <sup>1/</sup> This estimate of farm residents is not significantly below the 1979 figure. However, over the last 2 years, there was a significant decline of 450,000 residents. Regionally, the largest concentration of farm residents is in the North Central States, with 45 percent of the total U.S. farm population.

A related report issued jointly by the Bureau of the Census and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) <sup>2/</sup> noted the following characteristics of the 1980 farm population:

- o Compared with the nonfarm population, farmpeople are more likely to be White than Black or of Hispanic origin.
- o Farm residents tend to be older than their nonfarm counterparts.
- o There are more male than female farm residents.
- o Although farm residents are more likely to be employed in agriculture than in nonagricultural industries, they no longer make up the majority of all agricultural workers.
- o Unemployment remains relatively low among farm residents, although their average income is lower than that for nonfarm residents.

Estimation of the geographic distribution of the U.S. farm population during 1979-80 reveals some slight, insignificant changes in each region's share of the farm total, with the relative rankings of the regions remaining unchanged.

Since it was first counted, the farm population has declined almost steadily. The North Central region currently has the highest number of farm residents, while the South, which from 1920 through the midsixties was the first in the number of people living on farms, ranked second. The South's share of the farm population has dropped because of heavier rates of population loss than the rest of the country. The apparent increase in number of farm residents in the Northeast is not statistically significant.

<sup>1/</sup> The estimate of the U.S. farm population is a five-quarter average centered on April 1980. In this case, quarterly estimates for October 1979 and January, April, July, and October 1980 were used with a weight of one-eighth given to each of the two October estimates and a weight of one-fourth to each of the other 3 months.

<sup>2/</sup> Vera Banks and Diane DeAre, Farm Population of the United States: 1980, Current Population Reports, Series P-27, No. 54, U.S. Bureau of the Census and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, 1981.

The North Central region's relatively high position is consistent with its overall agricultural production record--it contains the highly productive Corn Belt, Northern Plains, and Lake States farm production areas.<sup>3/</sup> In 1979, these production areas accounted for 43 percent of the national total of \$133 billion in cash receipts from farming.

The North Central region also has a higher than average proportion of its total population living on farms. In 1980, nearly 5 percent of all its people were farm residents, compared with just 2.7 percent nationally. The southern farm component roughly equaled the national average, while both the Northeast and West had relatively small proportions of their populations residing on farms.

Although the two divisions of the North Central region, the West North Central and the East North Central, rank first and second, respectively, in number of farm residents, the farm share of each division's total population differs significantly. In the West North Central division, the farm population makes up nearly 10 percent of the total--the highest proportion found among all nine divisions. In the highly urbanized East North Central States, farm residents account for 3 percent of the total.

The estimates in this report relate to the rural civilian population living on farms, regardless of occupation. These estimates are based on the farm definition introduced into farm population statistics in 1978. Under this current definition, the farm population consists of persons living in rural areas on places that sold, or normally would have sold, \$1,000 or more of agricultural products during the reporting year.

The previous definition, used since 1960, defined the farm population as all persons living in rural areas on places of 10 acres or more with at least \$50 worth of agricultural products sold and places of under 10 acres with at least \$250 worth of agricultural products sold during the reporting year. Under both definitions, persons in institutions, summer camps, motels, and tourist camps and those living on rented places where no land is used for farming are classified as nonfarm.

Sources and Reliability of Estimates--April-centered annual estimates of the total number of people living on U.S. farms are obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), Bureau of the Census. These estimates are subject to sampling variability; tables of standard errors for April-centered annual averages for 1979-80 are presented in the annual Census-USDA farm population report for 1980. Estimates for geographic areas are based on data obtained from the CPS and USDA's June Enumerative Surveys. Since the estimates are based on sample data, they may differ somewhat from figures that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken.

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<sup>3/</sup> States in these farm production areas are: (Corn Belt) Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio; (Northern Plains) North and South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas; (Lake States) Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan.

U.S. farm population living in various regions and divisions,  
April 1979 and 1980 1/

Area	Farm population <u>2/</u> :Percentage distribution: Farm population as a percentage of each area's total resi- dent population, 1980 3/					
	1980	1979	1980	1979	1980	1980 3/
	- Thousands -			Percent - - -		
	:	:	:	:	:	:
	United States	6,051	6,241	100.0	100.0	2.7
Region: <u>4/</u>	:	:	:	:	:	:
Northeast	:	443	417	7.3	6.7	.9
North Central	:	2,730	2,825	45.1	45.3	4.6
South	:	2,162	2,242	35.7	35.9	2.9
West	:	716	757	11.8	12.1	1.7
Division: <u>4/</u>	:	:	:	:	:	:
New England	:	89	81	1.5	1.3	.7
Middle Atlantic	:	354	336	5.9	5.4	1.0
East North Central	:	1,207	1,269	20.0	20.3	2.9
West North Central	:	1,522	1,556	25.2	24.9	8.9
South Atlantic	:	744	756	12.3	12.1	2.0
East South Central	:	717	776	11.9	12.4	4.9
West South Central	:	701	710	11.6	11.4	3.0
Mountain	:	310	329	5.1	5.3	2.7
Pacific	:	406	427	6.7	6.8	1.3

1/ Data may not add because of rounding.

2/ Similar State estimates for 1979 are not available; State estimates for 1980 will be published when farm population figures become available from the 1980 Census of Population.

3/ Resident population was obtained from the 1980 Census of Population.

4/ States in the geographic regions and divisions are:

Northeast

New England--

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Middle Atlantic--

New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

North Central

East North Central--

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin

West North Central--

Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota

South

South Atlantic--

Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South

Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia

East South Central--

Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee

West South Central--

Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas

West

Mountain--

Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming

Pacific--

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

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